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An *Epiſtle* to be Communicated to *Friends*, & to be read in the Fear of the Lord in their Men and Womens Meetings, and other Meetings; only among Friends, as they in the Wiſdom of God ſhall ſee meet and ſerviceable.

FRIENDS,

WHereas it hath pleaſed the Lord in the unſpeakable Riches of his Mercy, to viſit a Remnant in his Love, and to meet with us in a Way where we expected him not, when we were wandring from Mountain to Hill, and chuſing our own Ways, ſeeking the Living amongſt the Dead; yea, when we had long thus wearied our ſelves, and almoſt diſpaired of finding what we fought, but were ſaying in our ſelves, *who ſhall aſcend up, or deſcend down for us, to bring that to us, without which our immortal Souls can find no Reſt?* Even in that time is the Lord appeared, not as a God afar off, but a God near, even in our Hearts is he appeared through the Light of his Son, and thereby open'd he our Hearts and Underſtandings, according to his divine Wiſdom, who knew every ones State and every ones Neceſſity; and he became as a Pillar of a Cloud by Day, and as a Pillar of Fire by Night unto all ſuch as imbraced and received his Appearance, and followed him faithfully; yea, he became as a *wall of fire* round about them who did whole-

ly put their truſt in him. And thus hath he gathered us to be a people, who were once as ſcattered Sheep that knew not the true Shepherd; and hath made us as Firſtlings upon his holy Mountain, that we might be as Lights and Leaders to the next Generations; and many are ſo in the Sight of the Lord and his Anointed, and are ſo felt and known among his People.

And ſeeing we are called to be as Firſtlings and Examples to the Generations that are coming after us, it is highly needful that we watch diligently in the Fear and Wiſdom of God, that nothing may be, nor remain among us as an Old Leaven, to grieve and burden the Redeemed, nor to be an Occaſion of Evil Example to the Young Ones that are coming up after us: And conſidering that it is every ones Duty to be faithful in their Meaſures, and not to put that under a *Buſhel* which is manifeſted from the Lord, but to bring it forth in the true Love of God, and Faithfulneſs to each other, to the edifying and building up, and to the Amendment and Admonition of thoſe concerned, and that all Cauſes of Stumbling might be removed, and that we might not leave a *Hoof* in *Egypt*, but might all follow the *Lamb* as the *Redeemed of the Lord* together; and being Waſhed, Sanctified and Born again, might come to ſing the New Song, with the New Name in our Foreheads, and Hallelujahs in our Mouths, *Amen*, *Amen*.

For theſe good Ends it is in my heart to ſignifie theſe two things, that at the preſent are principally upon me, which I have born a weight concerning for ſeveral years, and did hope that ſome elder and fitter might feel the like Weight, and bring forth a Teſtimony concerning the ſame, whereupon I have forborn as long as well I durſt; but now finding that I am not clear-

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ed of the Matter, but that in a freſh living Senſe it is renewed in me, I dare not longer forbear to write the things that are upon my Spirit in theſe two Particulars, and recommend the ſame unto God's Witneſs in all Conſciences.

The *firſt* thing that lies before me is, concerning the *bringing up of our Children*, which is a very weighty Concern; and every one that hath the bringing up of Children will have very much to anſwer for, if they do not quit themſelves as before the Lord in all Diligence and Faithfulneſs; they are God's Creatures, and given to Parents as a Gift from him, upon whom they are to improve their utmoſt Diligence, that they may grow up in the Fear of God; and that Parents ſhould not over-look things in their Children through fond Affection, which they know by the Light of Jeſus to be evil and bad; neither ſpeak to them in a *ſlender Reproof*, as *Eli* did to his *Sons*, but from their youth upwards to ſet before their Eyes the Weight & Danger of their Iniquity, and that in a Holy Zeal, as for the Lord, and in a deep ſenſe of his holy Power, ſeeking in their young years to reach the Witneſs of God in them, and above all things, to be a Good Example to them in all things, or elſe we break down in them that which we ſeek to build up; for how can we build them up in the Faith, except we ſo ſtand in the Faith as to obtain the Victory in our ſelves? and how can we bring their Minds to the Light of Jeſus, except we walk in it? Neither ought any one to be bitter to their Children, nor to require more of them then we know they are of Ability to perform; and when they fall ſhort of their Duty, not to Correct them in our own Wills, nor in a Wrathful Angry Mind; for that Mind is it ſelf for Correction; but on the contrary, to help them with

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the Rod of a gentle Chaſtizement, in the Fear of God, to bow their own ſtubborn Wills, and ſo comes the Witneſs in them to be reached, and they grow ſenſible in themſelves *that the Rod hath been a Help to them*, and come to feel a *Love* and *Unity* with them that have ſo helped them, while their Minds are kept to the Truth.

And ſeeing we are as a *City ſet upon a Hill*, and as *Fore-runners* and *Leaders to the next Generations*, where and in what ſhould the Pattern of our Godly Lives more appear and ſhine forth, then to the Innocent Children of our own Birth and Generation, which are committed to us as a particular Charge and Miniſtry, from their time of greateſt Innocency upwards, to whom we are bound by the Band of *Nature*, and by the Ordinance of *God*, to take Care over, and to bring up in his pure Fear, in all Wiſdom, Diſcretion and Watchfulneſs, *that we may be a good Savour in them and to them, whether it be unto Life, if they be Obedient, or unto Condemnation, if they become Rebellious?* But alas! (with a great grief of ſpirit I write it) here is a great *want* and *ſhortneſs* in many profeſſing *Truth* (I ſpeak not of all) for *firſt*, they receive not their *Children* as from the Lord, in the Faith, as his Gift, neither do they offer them up again to him in their *hearts*, as being his, but ſeeing their own Likeneſs brought forth, imbrace it as their own, and nouriſh it up in the *ſelf-love*, and their *lives* being bound up in the *children*, every Appearance of *ſickneſs* or *death* is as a *death to the Parents*; and accordingly if the Child grow up till its perverſe and crooked Will begins to appear, then is the Father (and for the moſt part, moſt of all the Mother) afraid to give it due Correction, fearing leſt the Child ſhould be grieved and vexed, and perhaps grow ſick, yea, perhaps dye, if it ſhould be corrected to the breaking of its ſtout and ſtubborn Will; and what is this but Unbelief

belief and Self-love in such Parents? but when Parents receive & possess their Children in the Faith, then the Light rules in the Parents, and that gives daily *wisdom* to rule the Children in *God's wisdom*; but when *fleshly affection* rules, what miserable *disorder* doth it bring forth, even amongst them that profess *truth*? and many times their *children* grow worse then many in the *world*; and that which is most to be lamented it happens sometimes, *that the Parents have not quit themselves as they ought, nor fully clear'd themselves of their Blood*, so that there lies a Guilt upon the Parents, and an Offence and stumbling in the minds of the Children, when they come to years, and to see how their Parents *Care* was not over them as it ought to have been: Oh, that none among us might be found guilty in this matter, but that every Friend would be diligent to keep a Good Conscience in the sight of God, that our Children may have a blessed Remembrance of us when we come to be taken from them, and they come to be in our state and condition, and that the Remembrance of our dealing with them may be as a good Pattern to them, and so from Generation to Generation, to the Honour and Glory of him who first called us, and to the edifying of them in the Faith, and to our Joy and everlasting Comfort, *Amen.*

The second thing that lies as a weight upon me, and have done for several Years, is concerning the *manner of Trading* that is practised by several professing the pure Principle of Truth, both Merchants and Shop-keepers, and other Trades-men, who take too much Liberty in getting and borowing Money of others to inlarge their Trading in the World, beyond what Truth allows: When I first felt the weight of this

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this matter upon me, I presently examined my own Affairs, and took such a course as to prevent all peril of any Body suffering by me, however things might happen; and the same course did our Brethren take, who lived in those parts, they feeling the weight of the matter upon them as well as I; so that we came to sit every one as under our own Fig-tree, being satisfied that if we came to suffer loss in our outward things, whether for our Testimony, or by War, or by Sea, we should lose but our own: But many I find to be otherwise minded, who out of a greedy, though uncertain Hope of Profit, gets that which is other Mens into their Hands; and when they see things goes not according to their Expectations, but that Losses and Crosses happens in their Trading, are not so faithful and open hearted to let their Creditors know thereof, but rather goes on, setting themselves at Ease, and takes a large Liberty in their House-keeping and Expences, as if all that is under their Hands were their own; and this lasts a while, until not only their own, but other mens Estates are spent also, and all the while under a shew of Profession, although all uprightness, and fear of God, and regard to make a righteous Account with men be lost; these are a stink among men, and a shame to their Profession: And this Evil increaseth daily in some parts of this Nation, where many young Ones, brought up among us, and hath little to begin withal, upon the Reputation of Truth dares to adventure upon, and get Credits, and set themselves in a high posture of Trading, House-keeping, and Expences. And some that are Ancient Professors of Truth, and should watch over them, and Counsel and Bridle them with the Bridle of Truth and Righteousness, in the Power and Wisdom

Wiſdom of God, they are ſo incumbred with great Dealings, and great Debts, and Credits, and Adventures, both of what is their own and other mens, that they are not without Peril and Danger of falling ſhort at one time or other, if loſs at Sea, or ſpoiling of Goods for their Teſtimony ſhould happen to themſelves; & in the mean time that Godly care and jealouſie is not taken by ſuch over the younger ſort as it ought to be; but ſome runs on without fear of God, or upright Communication of their State and Condition unto ſound and faithful weighty Friends (and eſpecially to ſuch, whom they have made to be concerned in their Concerns) as they ought to do from time to time, that it might ſtand in their choice, whether they would be longer concerned with them or not; which is but a righteous and juſt thing, that every Creditor ought to keep, not only the Propriety, but the Command of what is his own, to ask it and receive it, when he ſees cauſe, and not to be beguiled by great ſhews, as if the Debtor were in a good Condition as to his outward Eſtate, when indeed its very bad: But ſuch do like this World, firſt ſeek the Kingdom of this World under a Profeſſion of Truth: But if the Kingdom of Heaven were firſt ſought, as it ought to be, then every one would ſink down in the fear of God, to feel him leading them and ordering their Trading and Merchandize in ſujection to his Will, *Jam.* 4. 13, 14, 15. *Go to now, ye that ſay to day or to morrow, We will go into ſuch a City, and continue there a Year, and buy and ſell, and get Gain; whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow: For what is your Life, it is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away. For that ye ought to ſay, If the the Lord will, we ſhall live and do this or that.* And not to go on

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in their own Wills, adventuring the Eſtates of others without their knowledge or conſent; when they themſelves knows well enough, that if the Adventures fail, their Security muſt fail alſo. Oh! how many Widdows and Orphans, Old and Weak are there oppreſſed and wronged by theſe things? Doth not ſuch think and believe that the Want, Poverty, and Cry of theſe will bring down Vengeance from the Righteous God? or think they not, that God will viſit for theſe things for his pretious Truth and Names-ſake, and for the Cry of the Opreſſed? yea, aſſuredly he will plead their Cauſe, and will disburthen and clear his Truth and People of them, & their unrighteous Deeds together.

Is it not our duty, both Old and Young, to ſet our Affairs in ſuch a poſture, as that we may be out of danger that any Body ſhould ſuffer by us, while we in the mean time only aim at our own profit & advantage. Oh, let the Truth here be judge, and then I know the Elder Friends will labour to quit themſelves in this matter, and ſo have power to put a ſtop and bridle to ſuch young Ones as takes this courſe, or elſe the peril and reproach of both will lie at their Door in a great meaſure. Oh! that a holy Zeal may increaſe in many Hearts for the removing of this great Evil, and let go the eager deſire of great profit; and every one to be content with his own, and ſerve the Lord and his Truth therewith according to his Ability. (and if he pleaſe, he will increaſe it) And take care of the younger ſort, and become good Examples to them in this matter, that the ſtink of offences in this kind may be ſtopped, and the Truth of God may proſper and flowriſh more and more, *Amen.*

Colcheſter the 29th of the 9th Mon. 1677.

Geertruyd Derik Nieſen.